



"The Grim Reaper" and "Dalton McGuinty" aim to behead OPSEU regional vice-president Dave Lundy.

EMC News - The last few years have not been kind to public sector employees who work for the provincial government. Nearly 3,400 employees have been laid off in the last three years, and union representatives say that there are as many as 1,900 more to come.

Local provincial employees could be found on Princess Street at MPP John Gerretsen's office doorstep last Friday afternoon protesting these cuts, and more specifically the 50 jobs that were lost last week in the Kingston area, which they believe to be intricately linked with the new lower corporate income tax rates.

"The reason that happened is that Dalton McGuinty, like (provincial Conservative leader Tim) Hudak, has decided (to put) corporations before communities, CEOs before children, and profits before people," said OPSEU regional vice-president Dave Lundy.

The issue is especially relevant with a provincial election just around the corner. Neither party, according to Lundy, is a friend to public sector employees:

"Dalton and Hudak, they're in a bidding war, and they're bidding against each other in an effort to gain votes to see how much public service they can cut before the election."

According to OPSEU, the Liberals have outlined \$1.5 billion in spending cuts over the next four years in their 2011 budget, and are committed to a review of all programs administered and funded by the government for possible privatization.

Citing the Conservative's election platform, OPSEU believes the party wants to cut \$2.3 billion in services, and would require public servants to compete with the private sector for government contracts.

Union representatives and protesters wanted to inform citizens that these cuts come at a significant cost, not just to government employees, but to everyone who lives in the province.

Chris Cormier, OPSEU executive board member for the region, explained that "some of the layoffs included ground source water inspectors and scientists for the Ministry of the Environment. We want to remind people that Walkerton was only 10 years ago."

He added that other layoffs have included people who look at special assessments for children with special needs, and those who regulate Payday loans.

"This work is very important," he said. "We need to stop cutting public sector jobs."

Cormier also took the opportunity to rebuff some of the stigmas that are often associated with so-called "spoiled" public sector employees.

"Everybody needs a good job," he said. "People don't realize these jobs are really important and that they add value and safety to their communities."

Union representatives also came armed with studies disputing the widely-held doctrine that corporate tax cuts lead to more job opportunities.

Citing a Statistic Canada study, Cormier pointed out that "right now we know that in Canada alone (excluding financial institutions) there's almost half a trillion dollars in cash in companies' hands, and they still continue to cut corporate taxes. And there's no proof and no evidence that they actually create jobs."

Vice President Lundy echoed this sentiment:

"As a matter of fact, for every dollar of untargeted tax cuts the government hands out to Bay Street, less than 30 cents returns in the form of some kind of job or benefit to the province of Ontario."

He said that it is reckless and socially irresponsible to continue these tax cuts:

"Hudak and McGuinty say that if we give (the corporations) \$2.4 billion more, then they'll create a job or two. It hasn't worked for 20 years, why would it work now?"

MPP John Gerretsen was contacted for a response, but was not available to comment.

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